

TIP TOP WEEKLY

"An ideal publication for the American Youth"

No. 142.

Price, Five Cents.

FRANK MERRIWELL PUZZLED

OR
THE MYSTERY OF INZA



FRANK MERRIWELL

"AN IDEAL PUBLICATION FOR THE AMERICAN YOUTH."

TIP TOP WEEKLY.

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the N. Y. Post Office, STREET & SMITH, 81 Fulton St., N. Y. Entered According to Act of Congress, in the Year 1898, in the Office of the Librarian of Congress, Washington, D. C.

No. 142

NEW YORK, December 31, 1898.

Price Five Cents.

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FRANK MERRIWELL PUZZLED; OR, THE MYSTERY OF INZA.

By the Author of "FRANK MERRIWELL."

CHAPTER I.

THE STAGE MANAGER'S TROUBLE.

Frank found Havener sitting alone in one of the dressing rooms, holding a letter, a worried, troubled look on his rugged face.

"Any trouble, Mr. Havener?" Merry asked.

The stage manager looked up.

"Yes," he nodded, shortly.

Frank hesitated, and then, as Havener did not see fit to explain at once, he asked no further questions, knowing the man was one who did not care to have others seek to pry into his private affairs.

In a few moments, however, Havener spoke.

"This letter is from Cassie," he said.

"Oh!" cried Frank, quickly. "How is she?"

"Better."

"Well?"

"She says so, but I do not believe it. You know she has been out of the hospital some time now."

"You told me."

"What do you think she wants to do?"

"Haven't an idea."

"Well, she has a chance to go on the road, and she says she is going."

Merry whistled softly.

"I know she is not able to go," declared Havener, getting up and walking the floor. "You know just how she was when she was out before. She was not strong, and she had to use morphine to brace her up every night she played. Now that she has been out of the hospital such a short time, she can't be as well as she was before. And yet she wants to go on the road. It will be suicide!"

It was plain that he was powerfully troubled, and, knowing all the particulars of the case, Merriwell did not wonder.

Havener was a reticent man, but he had come to talk to Merry about himself and Cassie, knowing that Frank was fully aware of the exact condition of affairs. A man in trouble longs to talk to somebody, though he may rigidly refrain from doing so. A woman in love is sure to talk about it, even though she may resolutely determine that she will not.

"What can I do, Frank?" asked the stage manager, desperately. "The girl must not kill herself. What she needs is rest. If she kills herself, she will kill me; but I can't seem to impress the seriousness of the matter on her."

"Have you written her that she must be quiet and rest?"

"Have I! Well, I should say I had."

"Where is she stopping?"

"In a boarding house. She says it is a good place and the people are kind to her. Think of her leaving a decent place to go on the road in her weak condition and knock around over the country playing one night stands! She'll have to go with a cheap company, and she may not get her money. That's not what I am worrying about so much. She might not be strong enough to do all the work they would require, singing, dancing, and that sort of thing, for you know she is a good singer and can dance to beat the band. They will be pretty sure to pile it on hard when they find how her specialties take. It will knock her out in a hurry, and she can't stand another knockout now. Perhaps the stage manager will be a ruffian and swear at her—curse her when she is so tired she can't go on to respond to the applause she is bound to win. They do it, Merriwell—they do it! Some stage managers treat their people like slaves—like dogs! They drive them to work; they curse them when they fail to win applause; then they curse them if they can't go on and on and on for every call an enthusias-

tic audience gives. Sometimes if an audience could know the suffering it was causing it would not call a dancer out to dance and dance and dance again till she drops from exhaustion the moment she is in the wings. And I can't bear to think of any stage manager swearing at my Cassie—I won't have it! No, by the Lord Harry, I won't have it!"

All this from a man who seldom talked to anybody more than was absolutely necessary. It astonished Frank.

"I don't wonder that you object to her going out with a company, Havener."

"But how am I to prevent it?"

"She should be content to wait a while now that she is comfortable."

"It—it's—it's this way——" the stage manager began, and then he stopped, embarrassed.

"You know I am your friend," said Frank; encouragingly. "You may tell me anything."

"Hang it all, Merriwell! I'd marry the girl at once and take care of her if I were free to do so, but you know my divorce has not been decreed yet, and I can't do that."

"No."

"What I was going to tell you is that—that I've been sending her money!" blurted Havener, desperately. "Somebody had to do it, for she had none of her own."

"I understand."

"Well, now she refuses to take any more from me. Says she is going to earn enough to pay me back. She's proud, is Cassie. She wouldn't have any one know for the world that she has been taking money from a man who is married, even though that man has not lived with or even seen his wife for four years. You know Cassie is straight as a string, Merriwell—and ——"

string, Merriwell, and——"

"I know it, Havener; she is all right."

"Well, think of my position! She won't let me help her any more, and I can't marry

her—now. I don't know that my wife is living. It is possible I may be a widower without being aware of it. The situation is something to drive to drive a man crazy!"

"I believe it will come out right in the end."

"Not if Cassie has to go out on the road again. She'll be obliged to continue the use of morphine. You helped her once—you came near curing her."

"I did what I could, but that was nothing."

"It was everything. Why, you almost made a Christian of her, Frank Merriwell. She bought a little Bible, and she took to reading it every night and praying. At first they laughed at her and tried to guy her, but she kept right on, and they dropped it when they found she was in earnest. She prayed for strength to give up the morphine habit, and she had almost won the battle when that—that accident happened. Then, when she was taken to the hospital again, morphine was used to relieve the pain, and now the habit is on her firmer than ever. You know what she told you, Merriwell—you know she said she'd never marry me unless she could cure herself of it. Think what this means to me—think, think!"

Havener walked the floor, his hands clenched, his face showing his suffering.

Frank began to feel conscience stricken.

"I am afraid," he said, "that I have been thinking too much of myself and my own affairs of late."

"You have had enough to think of," acknowledged Havener. "That fellow Lockwell has given you any amount of trouble, but I don't fancy he'll bother you any more."

"I'm not so sure of that. Lawrence wrote me, you know, saying he believed Lockwell crazy. He said the fellow had a perfect mania to kill me."

"That was queer of Lawrence, after he jumped out and left us as he did."

"Rather odd, but he explained it in his let-

ter by saying that, although he hated me, he didn't want me to think he had any hand in Lockwell's attempt on my life or anything Lockwell might do. I believe he had sympathy with Lockwell till he met the fellow after leaving the company, and found Lockwell daffy and determined to murder me."

"Well, I should think even a crazy man might be scared after having such a narrow escape from death at the hands of a mob as Lockwell did. Yes, you have troubles of your own, Merriwell, and I have no right to bother you with mine."

"I am glad, Mr. Havener, that you think enough of me to speak to me about your troubles. If there is anything I can do——"

"You might do something," said the stage manager, eagerly; "but it is asking too much of you, for it will take some of your time, and I know every minute is valuable."

"Tell me what it is. I will do it."

Havener hesitated, and then, standing in front of Frank, he said:

"You know how much influence you have on Cassie. I believe she will heed what you say more than anybody else."

"I don't know about that; perhaps——"

"I know—I am sure. Now, if there was a place for her with this company——"

Instantly a troubled look came to Frank's face, for he fancied that Havener was about to ask him to release one of the actresses in the company and take Cassie Lee in her place.

"You know there is no place—now," he swiftly said. "I can't release anybody without good cause. You wouldn't have me do that?"

"No, I didn't mean that. But there may be a place, some time."

"Possibly."

"When there is, will you——"

"I'll take Cassie in."

"That's it—that's what I wanted to know. Now, Frank, if you'll do something else."

"What is it?"

"Write Cassie a letter. Advise her to remain where she is for the present; tell her you may have a chance for her later. She'll heed you—and she'll pay attention to you. Will you do it?"

"This very day," promised Frank.

Havener looked relieved.

CHAPTER II.

A PERSISTENT FOE.

Douglas Dunton came strolling into the dressing room, smoking a cigar.

"What, ho!" he cried, striking an attitude. "Have I intruded on a secret conclave? Methinks I am not wanted, and I had better hie myself henceward."

Dunton, who played the part of a villain on the stage, and who had once seemed a villain in real life, was developing into something of a comedian when not before the footlights. Strange enough, however, he could not do a thing with comedy on the stage.

Frank, who had not liked the fellow at first, was beginning to understand Dunton better. He could see that the fellow was neither a rascal nor a hero, but just an ordinary actor, possessed by likes and dislikes, the same as other people.

Dunton was about to turn and leave the dressing room, but Havener assured him that it was unnecessary.

"I am going myself," he said, and went out.

"By me halidom, whatever that is," said Dunton, "I know not what to make of that person. He is a stage manager that neither (notice that I pronounce it nyther) swears nor snarls, and yet he is possessed of a power to make others obey him. It is most marvellous. Prithee, doth understand it?"

"It is his way."

"True, your excellency, and yet he is so unlike others of his vocation with whom it hath

been my sad fortune to mingle that he remains to me a constant source of wonder. But how art thou feeling to-day, me lud, after all the honors and triumphs with which thou hast been laden of late? I see it hath not been necessary to hoop thy caput."

Frank laughed.

"Not yet," he said. "I haven't been attacked by the swelled head."

"It is passing strange," murmured Dunton, with the tip of his index finger resting against his chin. "Even though I am older than thou, I am fain to fancy such glory would disturb the even tenor of my ways."

"The swelled head is a bad thing for a young man to get. It is pretty sure to spoil him."

"Wisdom floweth from thy lips, most noble one, like a rivulet from a bubbling spring. (Now, isn't that poetic!) The enlarged caput should studiously be avoided, for it hath been the destroyer of many a promising youth."

"Look here, Dunton," said Frank, sitting down on a trunk, "what sort of a fairy story were you giving me this morning when you said you believed you had seen Lockwell in this place?"

"I pledge thee my honor I spake nothing but the solemn truth."

"Where did you see him?"

"In front of the post office."

"Are you sure?"

"No," answered the actor, seriously; "but I believed it to be him at the time."

"Why didn't you make sure?"

"I intended to, but he skipped me. There is a front door and a side door. I followed him into the building, but he must have went straight out by the side door—if it was him."

"Well, if he is here, it's likely that means more trouble, and I am getting weary of this business."

"I don't wonder. It would have been a

good thing if the people of Blazer had succeeded in finishing him when they strung him up to a lamp-post after he tried to shoot you."

"I thought they had finished him. Ephraim brought the report that he had been lynched."

"And then I brought the sad news that the sheriff of the town promptly cut him down. That must have been an awful disappointment to you, Merriwell."

"I do not wish the fellow lynched, but——"

"I should wish him lynched, or any old thing, if he had bothered me as he has you."

"You know Lawrence wrote me that he believed the man insane."

"I wouldn't take any stock in anything Lawrence wrote, and yet it is true that Lockwell acts like a person deranged. His one idea seems to be to injure you somehow, anyhow. He is determined to kill you—if he can. If he's in town, take my advice and put a good officer after him. We're to play here a week, and he'll find a chance to reach you somehow if he is permitted to run at large."

"Yes, I have thought of notifying the authorities, but there does not seem to be any great amount of law and order in this town. We struck the place yesterday, and there has been a shooting affray and a lynching since we got here."

"This is just the sort of place for Lockwell to accomplish his work. It is a rough mining town, and there are any amount of bad men who can be hired to do desperate work. I'm rather sorry we came here, Merriwell."

"I am not," declared Frank. "It was a great opportunity for us to open the new theatre here. We had a packed house last night, and I believe we shall do a rushing business all the week. There is not another place of this size in Colorado where we could play one piece a whole week to good business."

"That's right, but notice the kind of audience we had last night. It was a thoroughly rough crowd, and two men didn't do a thing at the end of the third act but pull their guns and shoot holes in the roof of the theatre."

"That was their way of showing how much they liked the play," smiled Frank.

"I had rather they would show it in some other way."

"Well, we mustn't be particular as long as they do not shoot the buttons off our clothes."

"All right; I reckon I can stand it if the rest of the company can. But it'll furnish a fine opportunity for Lockwell to do some more shooting."

"Keep your eye open for Lockwell. I think I shall swear out a warrant for his arrest and place it in the hands of an officer."

"Do it! That's the trick, Merriwell! The sooner you do so, the better."

Dunton had walked over to the window of the dressing-room, which opened out onto a side street of the town amid the mountains. Happening to look out of the window, he saw two men on the street below. The men were standing there, looking up at the building.

"Great Scott!" cried Dunton, aghast. "Here he is!"

"Who?" exclaimed Frank, starting toward the window.

"Lockwell, as I live!" shouted the actor. "He is down here with another man!"

A spring took Merriwell to the window, and he looked out.

"You are right!" came grimly from Frank's lips. "But the other man—I know him!"

"You do? Who is it?"

"Lockwell's particular friend, another of my enemies, Philip Scudder!"

CHAPTER III.

A DUDE IN DANGER.

"Who's Scudder?" asked Dunton.

Frank sprang forward, drawing his companion from the window.

"No time to answer questions now!" he exclaimed. "I must nail those chaps. Afraid they've seen us looking at them!"

Merriwell whirled and dashed out of the dressing room.

"Well," said Dunton, flinging aside his cigar and buttoning up his coat, "it behooveth me to follow the leader, else he might construe my hesitation as evidence of cowardice."

Then he ran after Frank.

Down the back stairs to the stage door bounded the actor. The door was wide open and Frank Merriwell was on the street.

But neither Lockwell nor his companion were in sight.

"Whither have they hied themselves?" questioned Dunton, not without a feeling of relief, for he knew Lockwell was desperate enough for any deed.

"Don't know," confessed Frank. "They were gone when I got here. Now I know they saw me."

"We must find them," said Dunton, weakly, but making a pretense of being very eager.

"I'd like to get hold of Lockwell," said Merriwell, as he hastened toward the corner.

Dunton followed.

When the corner of the building was reached, not a sign of the men for whom they were seeking could be found.

"They hustled to get away," said Frank, grimly.

"But it is plain Lockwell is watching you."

"Yes. Now I know beyond a doubt that

he is here, and that rascal Scudder is with him."

"Who's Scudder? Seems to me I've heard his name before, but——"

"He's the fellow who stole my play in St. Louis."

"Ah! I remember him now. You were going to push him, and Lockwell begged off for him."

"Yes, I let up on him because Lockwell told such a pitiful tale of his condition and the trouble it would bring on his wife."

"Now I rather think you wish you hadn't."

"Oh, it's possible Scudder will not attempt to make any trouble for me, although he is a desperate fellow."

"And it is possible he will make trouble for you. As for Lockwell, the sooner you swear out a warrant for him, the better it will be."

"Perhaps you are right," said Merry. "I believe I'll do it."

Straightway he sought the office of a justice of the peace, Dunton accompanying him.

On the main street of Blair, not far from the new theatre, they found a little building, the sign of which announced that it was the business office of Solomon Higgs, attorney-at-law and justice of the peace.

Mr. Higgs proved to be a small, thin little man, with a nose that was as blue as a whetstone, making him look as if he were nearly frozen, although the weather was mild and pleasant.

Mr. Higgs received them with great affability, and it was not long before the necessary warrant had been made out.

"Now," said Frank, "I wish to find an officer to serve this. Is there a sheriff in town?"

"Yes," nodded Mr. Higgs, "Bill Bronson will serve it for you."

"Where can I find Mr. Bronson?"

"Well, you'll be pretty sure to find him at the bar of the Clarendon Hotel. That's

where he hangs out the most of the time. My charge for making out the paper will be ten dollars."

Frank whistled.

"Don't you think that a trifle steep?" he asked.

"No, sir," answered the lawyer, stiffly. "It's dead cheap considering you are the first person who has given me any business for a week. You see, it's this way; out here there's not much law business, for almost ev'rybody settles their own law cases. If a man's got a grudge against another man, he loads his gun and goes out looking for him. That makes good business for the coroner and undertaker, but blamed poor business for the lawyer."

Frank found Mr. Higgs had no idea of charging anything less than ten dollars, and so he paid that sum for the warrant.

Then Frank and Dunton went over to the Clarendon Hotel to look for the sheriff.

They found Mr. Bronson "up against" the bar, talking to another man. Bronson proved to be a blear-eyed, unsteady person, who looked as if he had been steeped in liquor. The other man was a red-haired, excitable little man, whose left leg was shorter than his right. He was paying for the drinks.

"Methinks the sheriff hath pulled his leg till it will never return to its normal condition," murmured Dunton.

The little man was talking animatedly.

"Blair is a progressive town," he was saying. "It's got a bank, three hotels, two churches, twenty-one saloons, a new opera house, a first-class buryin'-ground, a Chinese laundry, and other things of that order, but, sir, it don't want no doods!"

Then he rose on his longest leg and smote the bar with his clenched fist.

"Well, whyfore is all this agitation?" demanded the sheriff, huskily. "I don't see just whatever you are coming at, Limpy."

"I'll tell ye," nodded Limpy, grimly. "There's is a dood in town."

"Do you mean any of them there show people? Because if you do, you may as well drop it, for they are under the protection of the city government while they remain here, and as the representative of the city government, I hereby announce that they are privileged characters, and they can wear b'iled shirts every durn day of the week, if they want to."

"It's not the show folk I mean."

"Then whatever are you drivin' at?"

"There's a dood in town," Limpy again asserted. "He arrived not over an hour ago, and he's stoppin' right here in this hotel."

"What sort of a dood?"

"One of the real kind. Wears shiny-leather shoes, creases in his pants, a collar that looks like a high board fence that's been newly whitewashed, carries a cane, and squints through a single-barreled eyeglass. He drawls, and says 'don't ye 'now,' and all that——"

Here the sheriff interrupted the speaker by grasping his shoulder and almost shouting:

"Is this straight, Limpy?"

"That's what I'm telling ye. He came here with an old man and one of the prettiest gals I ever set eyes on."

"Then it's my duty to warn him without delay to get out of here," said the sheriff. "His life is in danger every moment he lingers in this here vicinity."

"Sure thing," agreed Limpy. "The boys'll stand 'most anything, but they won't stand a real Eastern dood."

"No; somebody'll shoot him full of holes before he's been here a day."

"Big Pete——"

"Is on the rampage again, and he'll eat that dood on sight. I don't want any trouble with Pete, and so I think I'll find this dood and tell him to mosey along."

"It's your duty, Bill, as a representative of law and order."

"But the girl," said the sheriff, doubtfully. "Did she seem to be in company with this here dood?"

"That's whatever," answered Limpy. "I take it the old gent was her father."

"Mebbe the dood is her brother."

"No, nary time."

"How'd ye know?"

"Because he was payin' too much attention to her. I saw them, and he was smilin' and talkin' to her just as if he was dead broke on her, and I must allow he had good sense in being that way, for she was stunnin' enough to make a real man fall in love with her."

"How did she seem to take his attentions?"

"Well, as near as I could make out, she was pretty well satisfied by it."

"That settles it!" said the sheriff, decisively. "The dood must flee for his life. The boys wouldn't stand seein' him bracin' to a real handsome gal when Blair is full of real men what are lookin' for wives. I guess I'll have just one more drink on you, Limpy, and then I'll go notify this dood to pack up and levant."

But before the drink could be taken there was a sudden commotion outside the door. First a shot, then a yell, and a man came bursting into the room, dragging by the collar the very "dood" of whom Limpy and the sheriff had been talking.

CHAPTER IV.

THE NERVY FOP.

The man was a giant, being at least six feet and four inches tall, and weighing not less than two hundred and forty pounds.

That he was a desperado and a ruffian was apparent at a glance. He had a cruel face, a bull-dog jaw, and eyes set near together. He was roughly dressed.

"Whoop!" he roared. "Look hyar, gents, whatever do ye call this yar critter I've captured?"

He held the "dood" at arm's length.

The later was not over five feet and four inches tall, and he was dressed like a howling swell from his patent leathers to his brown derby.

Strangely enough, the little fellow, who was not more than twenty-two or twenty-three years old, did not seem at all frightened. He adjusted his monocle, which dangled from a cord, to his eye and took the measure of the big man, drawing:

"Aw! I beg your pawdon. Very rude of you, don't yer 'now? I am not just familiar with your Western ways, but really this does not seem exactly polite, don't yer understand."

The big man roared with laughter.

"Haw! haw! haw!" he shouted. "Perlite! Wa-al, that thar is rich! Why, ye dern little runt, who'd be perlite ter you?"

"Big Jim's got him!" said the sheriff, with a gesture of despair. "It's too late to save him!"

"That's so," agreed Limpy. "Big Jim will chaw him up!"

"What does this mean?" muttered Frank to Dunton. "Does that big ruffian run this town?"

"It seems that way," said Douglas, uneasily. "Methinks this is not a healthy place. I would that I were elsewhere."

Frank watched and awaited developments.

"Perhaps," slowly said the Eastern youth, "perhaps you are not responsible for your rudeness. You may not know any better, don't yer 'now!"

"Hey?" roared the giant. "Wot's that? Wa-al, dern my eyes! Do you dast talk ter me like that?"

"Or, if you know better," calmly pursued the fop, "you may be a bully who thinks it is smart to impose on those you fancy you are

able to handle on account of your superior size and strength. That is the most likely explanation of your brutal conduct."

"Hey?" again exploded the ruffian. "Blow me blind! but you are a sassy runt. I reckon yer don't know me!"

"I do not," said the dandy, distinctly. "I am not in the habit of making the acquaintance of creatures of your claws, don't yer understand?"

"Wa-al, I'll tell ye who I be. I'm Big Pete McAllister, ther-high cock of this hyer roost. I'm a big chief! I'm a holy terror on ten wheels! I run this yar city! When I put on my paint, dig up the hatchet, and take the war-path, every human critter in sight hunts his hole. I'm a bad man from Bad River, I am! I'm p'ison!"

"You seem to be a big fellow, 'pon my soul, sir," observed the youth as he drew forth a gold mounted cigarette case, calmly extracted a cigarette, and proceeded to roll it between his fingers. "I 'rawther think you have a deuced bad habit of talking through your hat," he continued, pulling out a bit of the tobacco from one end of the cigarette and flinging it aside. "I really wondah if you are as big a fool as you want people to believe," he went on, taking the cigarette in his lips and producing a diamond-studded match safe.

Pete McAllister gasped for breath. Never before had anyone dared to talk to him in such a manner. This weak, puny-appearing fop did not seem in the least afraid of him, for all his fierce words and manner.

With a roar, the bully flung the Easterner aside, at the same time reaching for a "gun."

The dandy was sent spinning like a top out to the middle of the floor, keeping on his feet with no small difficulty. He did not fall down, but stopped, standing with his right side toward McAllister. He still held the cigarette between his lips and the match safe in his hand. His cane was thrust under his arm, and he had not dropped it. Without glancing toward the ruffian who had dragged him in there, he took out a match, struck it on the heel of his shining shoe, and started to light the cigarette.

"He may be a dude," said Frank Merriwell to Douglas Dunton; "but he is no coward."

Big Pete had pulled his pistol. As the dude lifted the blazing match something happened.

Bang!

The ruffian fired without seeming to take aim.

Whiff!—out went the match, the tiny flame extinguished by the bullet from the desperado's pistol.

The fop did not even glance toward McAllister. He promptly flung the extinguished match aside and again took out his match-safe.

Now Frank believed it was time for the sheriff of Blair to interfere, and he appealed to that worthy.

"Mr. Bronson," he said, "as an officer of the law, you should stop this."

The sheriff stared at him and gave a snort.

"Look hayr, young feller," he said, "I reckon you'd best mosey out of this right away, or Big Pete may turn his 'tention to you next. I know you are one of them show galoots, an' you're under the protection of the city, but I'll allow that ther whole city government can't protect ye if Pete McAllister gets after your scalp."

"Then the city government is utterly worthless," declared Frank, with emphasis. "Such ruffians as this McAllister should be promptly suppressed."

"Perhaps you'd like the job of suppressin' him?"

"It's a task I'd undertake promptly if I were in your place, or resign my office."

Just what this might have provoked the sheriff to do or say is unkonwn, for, at that moment, the fop again struck a match and lifted it toward his cigarette.

Bang!

Big Pete's second shot was as unerring as the first. The bullet again extinguished the match.

Astonishing to relate, the fop did not glance toward the ruffian now. As unconcerned as if the match had been blown out by a gust of wind, he flung it aside and prepared to strike another.

"Great Moses!" gasped Douglas Dunton, staring at the fop in the utmost amazement. "What sort of person is he?"

"If he isn't all right, I'm a lobster!" came

admiringly from Frank Merriwell's lips. "I believe I have seen him before."

Scratch—splutter—flare! Another match was lighted.

Big Pete was no less astonished than the rest. He could not believe it possible the "dood" realized that his matches had been extinguished by bullets.

The short-legged man called "Limpy" had edged to the end of the bar, where he seemed seeking some place of shelter.

The fop lifted the burning match.

Bang!

For the third time a bullet from Pete McAllister's pistol put it out!

And then the Easterner once more flung the match aside and took another.

"I do know the fellow!" exclaimed Frank, who had been watching everything. "I thought I did. Clayton, Clayton—that's the same fellow! Why, that's Cool Clayton, of Harvard!"

"A college man?" breathed Dunton.

"Yes. It's no wonder he doesn't seem at all disturbed by what is happening. He made a record for himself as a man of nerve at college. There were a hundred stories afloat about his remarkable acts in times of peril and under all sorts of circumstances. His father is one of the richest men in the country, and Clayton had nothing but money to spend. He spent it, too! He literally poured it out like water."

"He's going to light another match."

This was true. Clayton did so, and again the match was snuffed out, as the others had been.

Six matches in all did he light, and each and every one was extinguished by a bullet from Big Pete's pistol.

The moment the sixth shot was fired, Clayton flung the match aside, whirled on his heel, and advanced straight toward McAllister, who stood with the smoking pistol in

l the fop, icily, "I believe
pty. That being the case,
hat you deserve, don't yer

s cane and struck Big Pete
oss the face with it!

CHAPTER V.

TO THE FINISH.

The ruffian staggered, and the cane left a livid mark across his flushed face.

Without haste and with the utmost coolness, Clayton struck another match and lighted his cigarette.

"Limpy," called the sheriff, "go out and notify the coroner that his services are needed. Tell him a strange tenderfoot from the East has accidentally met with his demise in ther Clarendon Hotel."

"Then you propose to stand by and see the boy murdered?" came indignantly from Frank Merriwell's lips. "Well, you are not fit to fill the office you hold!"

Then he started toward McAllister and Clayton.

Dunton sprang after him, catching him by the arm, and whispering:

"Have you gone crazy, Merriwell! What ails you? Do you want to be shot?"

"Let go!" said Frank quickly. "I am going to stand by Clayton."

"You'll be killed!"

"Oh, I don't know!"

"I do! It's sure death!"

"I'll take my chances."

"Come away! It's nothing to you."

"It is something to me! Do you think I'll stand still and see that big brute do the little fellow up? Not on your life!"

Frank shook off Dunton's arm.

Big Pete had recovered, and he uttered a howl of fury, making a leap for the fop.

Swish—crack!

The cane cut through the air and again struck the ruffian across the face.

Back reeled Pete.

"Follow him up!" advised Frank, speaking to Clayton. "Now's your time! Give him another!"

"Really, I don't care to hurt the poor fellow," drawled the Harvard man. "He's just a common ruffian, don't yer 'now?"

"Common or not, he'll murder you, if you give him a chance."

"I rawther think the gentlemen present will see fair play."

"They are all scared to death of Big Pete."

"But you are not?"

"No."

"Then it's all right, Mr. Merriwell. I'll take my chances with you looking on to see that I get a square show, don't yer 'now?"

"You know me!"

"Yes. Haven't seen you since you pitched your lawst game for Yale against Harvard a year ago, but I recognized you the moment I saw you here."

There was no time for further talk, as Big Pete had recovered, and he was advancing on them, a murderous look on his brutal face.

"Say yer prayers, 'dood!" he snarled. "I'm goin' ter chaw ye up instanter!"

He had disposed of the pistol, and now his hands were working as if they burned to get hold of Clayton.

"I advise you to keep off," said Clayton, placidly. "I shall hit you again, don't yer 'now."

"And I'll wring yer neck, like yer were a chicken!"

"Stop!" commanded Frank, placing himself before the ruffian. "You know this young man is no match for you, you big scoundrel!"

Clayton touched Frank on the shoulder, drawing:

"Please don't, Merriwell. This is my affair, don't you understand. Let me have it out with him."

"Better not try it."

"I say yes," said the Harvard man, decisively.

Then he turned on McAllister.

"You miserable brute," he drawled, "I hate to soil my hands on you at all, don't yer understand, but you have forced a quarrel on me. I'll fight you fair and square, but you are not to pull pistol or knife."

By this time quite a crowd had collected, attracted by the sounds of the encounter, and more than one cried:

"That's fair!"

"The dood's got nerve!" declared a voice.

"Git ready!" roared McAllister. "It won't be no fight, fer I shall chaw ye up in less than a minute. Git ready!"

"Wait till I remove my coat," murmured Clayton, gently pulling off the garment. "And my cuffs," he added, detaching them and passing them to Frank.

Merriwell was anxious, even though he ad-

mired Clayton's courage. He feared for the result of the encounter.

"Be ye reddy?" shouted the impatient ruffian.

Clayton took out his watch, unhooked the chain, and passed them to Frank.

"All ready, don't yer 'now," he nodded, turning to face the ruffian.

Big Pete rushed at him, making a wild grab.

Clayton dodged, ducked, darted under the man's arm, at the same time giving him a jab under the chin with his left.

The Harvard man wore a ring on the hand, and it cut a gash in Big Pete's chin.

"First blood for the dood!" cried somebody.

"Give him room!" commanded Frank, pushing the crowd back, for he realized that Clayton needed space to dodge about and avoid the big ruffian.

Big Pete was astounded.

"Slipped me, did yer?" he grated. "Well, ye can't do it all the time."

Then there followed a long and savage battle, for the Harvard man astounded everybody by the manner in which he defended himself against his ruffianly adversary. He struck Pete again and again, but all his blows seemed to enrage the man instead of harming him.

With a sickening heart, Frank realized that Clayton was getting the worst of it, although he was fighting like a little tiger. Repeatedly Big Pete struck the fop with his ponderous fist, knocking Clayton down. Each time it seemed that the blow must be a finisher, but again and again the fop crawled to his feet and resumed the uneven conflict.

The pluck of the tenderfoot won the admiration of the spectators. Some of them ventured to express their feelings, but Big Pete was feared in Blair, and not one of the citizens dared interfere.

There was a person, however, who was longing to take part in the conflict.

It was Frank Merriwell.

Frank detested a ruffian and a bully, and he regarded fighting as low and degrading. It was his rule to keep out of a fight whenever possible, but there came times when he forgot the rule. On this occasion he forgot

plimentary remark to make.

No one saw Philip Scudder bend over Pete McAllister. No one heard him whisper in the fallen ruffian's ear:

"If you want to earn that fifty dollars, meet me in the Little Dandy saloon an hour from now."

Then Scudder and Lockwell hastened to leave the room and the hotel.

As soon as possible Frank Merriwell looked around for Creston Clayton, but the Harvard man was gone.

"Ye've got plenty o' time ter find him," said the sheriff. "Jest now you must have a drink with me."

"And me! and me! and me!" shouted one after another of the crowd.

It seemed that every man present was eager to treat the victor.

Douglas Dunton laughed.

"Merriwell," he said, "you're high cock of the walk here. You can have anything you want."

"That's right," said the barkeeper, who had overheard the remark. "He can have the whole saloon."

"Thank you, gentlemen, for your kindness," said Frank, speaking clearly and distinctly; "but I shall have to refuse."

There was a hush—a dead silence. In Blair it was an unpardonable insult to refuse an invitation to drink.

"Don't do it," whispered the sheriff in Frank's ear. "Ye're the most pop'lar man in ther city now, but ye'll spoil it ef yer refuse ter drink."

"I am very sorry, gentlemen," said Frank, quietly. "I know something of Western ways, and I know it is not polite to refuse to drink when another gentleman asks you; but I must explain that I never took a drink of liquor in my life, and I do not mean to begin now. I trust this explanation will be quite satisfactory, and I assure you that no offense

is meant. If I were a person who drank, I should be more than pleased to accept your hospitality."

The manner in which he said this won them completely. They looked at each other and nodded.

"He's all right," said one man, "and if he don't want to drink, I don't see no reason whatever why he should."

"Nary reason!" was the general cry:

"Gents," said the sheriff, "I perpose that we drink his health. I don't reckon he'll have any objections ter that."

"Not at all," assured Frank. "You are at liberty to do as you like."

So Frank's health was drank, and the sheriff made a little speech, in which he spoke in the highest terms of admiration concerning the youth who had whipped Big Pete. He wound up by saying:

"This yar business will make Frank Merriwell famous, an' I reckon every man, woman an' child in ther city'll go ter ther show this night to see ther chap what whipped Pete McAllister."

"Another streak of luck," whispered Douglas Dunton. "This was the best kind of advertising we could get in this place, Merriwell. Everything you do seems to be an ad. for us."

As soon as possible, Frank drew the sheriff aside and placed the warrant in his hands, giving him instructions to serve it.

"I'll do it ef I can find this yar Percy Lockwell," assured Bill Bronson. "Whatever is he like?"

Frank gave a description of Lockwell, following with that of Scudder.

"It's likely you will see the two together," he said. "Scudder was in the barroom during the fight. McAllister fell into his arms once, but I saw nothing of Lockwell."

"Ef ye see either of them, point him out ter me," said the sheriff. "I'd like ther pleasure

of makin' an arrest, fer I ain't done anything of ther kind fer high three weeks."

Thus at last Frank accomplished the purpose which had led him into the barroom of the hotel.

CHAPTER VII.

A COOL MEETING.

As soon as possible, Frank left the room, Dunton accompanying him. Douglas was in high spirits.

"Merriwell," he cried, "you are a holy wonder!"

"Don't!" urged Frank. "I'm tired of it!"

"Can't help saying it," persisted Dunton. "Why, I was scared to death. Thought you would be killed when you dipped into that scrap. Didn't think you had a show. I would have given anything to get you out of the place. And you whipped that ruffian without getting so much as a mark! I knew you could fight, but——"

"I had to fight!" exclaimed Merriwell. "I couldn't keep still after seeing that big brute punish poor little Clayton that way!"

"Well, you don't need to make excuses. You're high cock-of-the-walk in this town now. You've made yourself famous."

"Through a barroom fight!" exclaimed Merry, in disgust.

"Why, what ails you? You act as if you felt ashamed?"

"I do."

"No?"

"Yes!"

"Why?"

"It's enough to make any respectable person feel ashamed."

"Well, I don't know! I'd be proud enough if I'd done such a thing. You'll be the wonder of the place, mark what I say. It will be the best sort of advertising."

"I'd rather not have any advertising," said

Frank, sincerely.

"You are queer! I don't understand you."

"Is it queer to be ashamed to remember that you have taken part in a barroom fight? If so, I confess I am queer. I object to fighting anywhere. It is low and brutal. It arouses all the animal in a man, and lowers him. There is nothing I detest so much as a bully who is forever going about with a chip on his shoulder looking for trouble. One of the worst things that can happen to most youngsters is for them to get into a fight and whip somebody. After that they are pretty sure to think they are smart, and they go about looking for another person to whip. It gives them wrong ideas, and makes them bullies and cads. People begin to despise them for their conceit, and they are generally detestable. Happy is the boy who gets a good thrashing in his first fight. If he has the right kind of stuff in him it does not make him a coward, and it shows him that he is not the only person on earth who can fight."

"But you don't need to be taught anything of the kind," said Dunton. "This is not your first fight, and it can't be that you are feeling bad because McAllister failed to whip you."

"Hardly that," laughed Merry. "But I am feeling miserable to think that I found it necessary to fight with the big brute. As I grow older, I detest fighting more and more, and I am inclined to do everything in my power to avoid it."

"You could have avoided it to-day."

"No!" cried Frank, his eyes beginning to flash. "It was not possible after seeing that ruffian hammer little Clayton. I forgot everything then."

Dunton grinned.

"You cast your scruples aside," he said.

"Yes," nodded Frank; "I was burning to get at McAllister. I could hardly wait till the encounter was over. I confess it. All the worst side of my nature was aroused. I

longed to have revenge on Big Pete, and that is a degrading desire."

"Well, I never saw anybody just like you!" exclaimed Dunton. "Almost anybody else would have been elated. As for myself, I'm glad you did the chap. It'll mean a house for us to-night, or I am greatly mistaken. The story will go the rounds of the town, and it is just the kind of a yarn to make the people of this place turn out to see you."

"I don't like to think of it," declared Frank. "I hope we'll get a house, but I'd rather drawn it some other way. Now I am going to find Clayton. I want to know how bad the fellow was hurt."

They went to the office, and there they were informed that Clayton had gone up to his room, No. 17.

"It's right next to the rooms taken by the old gent and young lady that came with Mr. Clayton," explained the clerk. "You can't miss it. Go right up the stairs."

So Frank went up, Dunton saying he would wait below till he came down.

Merry had no trouble in finding No. 17. He rapped on the door, which was opened at once by a gray-headed gentleman, who must have been standing near it.

At sight of the gentleman Frank actually staggered.

"Mr.—Mr. Burrage!" he cried, in astonishment.

"Will you come in, Mr. Merriwell?" said the gentleman, quite calmly.

Beyond Bernard Burrage Frank saw Creston Clayton lying on the bed, his head and face covered by bandages and plasters.

But it was not the Harvard man who caught and held Merry's gaze. By the bed stood a handsome dark-eyed girl, whose face just then seemed strangely pale.

"Inza!" Frank almost shouted, as he sprang into the room. "Inza Burrage—here?"

With hands outstretched, he leaped toward

her. She did not seem to see his hands, but she bowed, coldly saying:

"How do you do, Mr. Merriwell."

That brought him up with a shock.

"Inza!" he repeated. "Inza, is it you?"

"Yes."

"But you—you do not seem—glad to—see me."

The girl lifted her haughty eyebrows a bit.

"Don't I?" she said, freezingly.

That was all. It was enough to astound Frank. What did it mean?

"Inza," he cried, "why do you meet me like this?"

Again that lifting of those haughty eyebrows.

"I am not aware that there is anything that compels me to meet you in any other manner."

"No rule to compel you—no! Nothing but your heart."

She laughed a bit, a scornful, cutting laugh.

"Don't try sentiment with me," she said. "We are no longer children. Those days are past and gone—forever!"

Somehow her words chilled him through and through. He stood staring at her in a helpless manner.

"You have changed," he muttered—"you have changed since those days!"

"Perhaps," she answered, flippantly. "So have you."

"I? How—tell me how?"

"Well, there was a time when you would not have stood by and seen a ruffian beat an inoffensive person—you would have interfered, even at the peril of your life. Then you were the Frank Merriwell I admired. As you have grown older, you have become more selfish, more thoughtful for your own safety, less generous and heroic. To-day you stood near and saw a ruffian beat Mr. Clayton senseless without interfering. You are no

longer the Frank Merriwell I admired. I cannot admire a person who has so much as one drop of cowardly blood in him."

Frank was dazed. Was this Inza who was speaking to him thus? He could scarcely believe it possible.

At first the color left his face, and then it came back with a rush. He realized that she had practically called him a coward. She could not have wounded him deeper if she had tried.

"Is that what you think of me?" he said, his voice hoarse and suppressed. "It strikes me that you are rather unjust and ungenerous. Perhaps Mr. Clayton will tell you that I urged him not to fight the ruffian."

"He said so," nodded Inza; "but still you did not interfere."

"Really, Inza," said Clayton, "you are altogether too hard, don't yer 'now. I wouldn't permit any man to interfere with my affair. I had to fight the fellow."

"But Mr. Merriwell stood by and saw the ruffian beat you unmercifully."

"I was fighting, don't you understand, and as long as I kept at it, no one had a right to meddle."

Inza made an impatient gesture, her dark eyes flashing.

"If there had been a single real man looking on the fight would have been stopped!" she cried.

Frank bowed.

"Your meaning is plain, Miss Burrage," he said, with freezing politeness. "I will not take the trouble to defend myself. Mr. Clayton, I am sorry that you received so many injuries, but I must compliment you on the game fight you put up."

"Thank yer, Merriwell," said the Harvard man, weakly. "I did my best with the fellow, but he was too much for me, don't yer 'now?"

"I trust that you will be out in a short time."

"Hope so myself. Got some business to attend to right away. That's what brought me here. Don't want to spend more time in this beastly place than is absolutely necessary."

Frank had but little more to say, and then, with frigid politeness, he took his leave.

CHAPTER VIII.

A PUZZLE FOR MERRY.

Like one in a trance, Frank turned to look at the door of that room. He could hardly believe it possible that Inza Burrage was there and had met him in such a manner. He did not understand it; he was puzzled.

Frank had been too proud to attempt to defend himself after Inza's open insinuation of cowardice. He had said nothing of his encounter with McAllister.

Through his mind flashed thoughts of the many times he had placed himself in positions of peril for Inza Burrage's sake, and his heart swelled with indignation over the injustice of her words. Had she forgotten the past?

Frank had thought her one of the noblest and most generous girls in the world, but now he began to wonder if he had been mistaken in judging her character. Surely she had shown nothing of nobleness or generosity in her treatment of him on this occasion.

He wondered how it happened that she was there in that new Colorado town. What had brought her to Blair in company with her father and Creston Clayton? There was a mystery about it, and it staggered him.

Then he thought of her familiarity with the languid Harvard man, and his heart swelled with a strange sensation that he did not understand just then, although he afterward realized that it was jealousy.

Clayton had called her by her first name!

Without doubt she had been in that room to care for him.

Then came the thought that Creston Clayton was the son of a very wealthy man, and Bernard Burrage's one ambition was to see his only daughter married to a rich man before he died. He had tried to force her into one or two unpleasant marriages, but Inza was a spirited girl, and the attempts had failed.

In those days, however, Frank Merriwell was supposed to be possessed of a comfortable fortune, and Inza was greatly attached to him. Now—

"It has changed!" thought Merry, bitterly. "I am poor. I have lost my small fortune, and that explains everything. Inza has grown worldly as she grew older, and she, like her father, is looking out for a good match. Bernard Burrage places money before sentiment, and it is not strange that his only daughter should be something like him. Still, I swear by the gods, I did not think it of her!"

He reached the head of the stairs and paused.

"I must compose myself. I am in no condition to meet Dunton now," he thought. "The fellow would read my trouble in my face."

He stood there some moments, thinking, thinking, thinking.

"Yes, Inza has turned from me," he muttered. "Well, perhaps it is not so strange, for she must know now that I care more for Elsie than for her."

Then he started as if pierced to the heart by a sudden stinging doubt. His jaw fell, and he stood there staring hard at nothing.

"Do I?" he whispered, huskily—"do I care more for Elsie?"

Then he hated himself for the doubt.

"Of course I do!" he grated. "I would be a wretch if I didn't!"

Thus he tried to convince himself.

"It is not so strange that Inza should turn from me," he murmured. "She has seen me giving Elsie more attention. She has seen me cling to Elsie when it seemed that Elsie was nothing but a light-hearted, fickle creature. When I was working on the railroad and was taken ill, Inza nursed me. Afterward, Little Nell told me that, as Inza sat by my bed, while I was delirious, I called for Elsie, Elsie, Elsie, but never once did I speak of Inza. That was enough. Well, it's all over now! This has settled it!"

His teeth came together with a click. Down the stairs he walked.

Dunton was waiting.

"Did you see Clayton?" asked the actor.

"Yes," nodded Frank, coolly; "and I met some other people in his room—some people I know."

"Indeed? Who were they?"

"The old gentleman and the girl who arrived in town with Clayton. They are a Mr. and Miss Burrage, old friends of mine."

"Well, that must have been a surprise."

"It was."

"What are they doing here?"

"I didn't attempt to question them, but I infer that they are here on business. I knew Miss Burrage when I was at school."

"Oh, one of your girl sweethearts, eh?" chuckled Dunton. "Ha! ha! ha! Look out, old fellow, or Elsie will be jealous."

"Oh, they are acquainted," said Frank, carelessly. "They are the greatest of friends."

Then there can't be any rivalry between them," declared Dunton. "If there was, they would not remain friends long."

"You don't know the girls," thought Frank. And then, all at once, he fell to wondering how Inza would receive Elsie.

"I must see Elsie at once," he decided, "and let her know Inza is here."

"Where are you going now?" asked Dunton.

"Over to the Magnificent."

That was the name of the hotel at which the company was stopping.

The moment Frank appeared on the street he found himself stared at in a most embarrassing manner by almost everybody. On his way to the Magnificent he heard more than one speak of him as the "tenderfoot what knocked the packin' outer Big Pete."

"Certainly you are a famous man in this town," chuckled Dunton. "I'll eat my hat if we don't have a rousing house to-night!"

When the hotel was reached, Frank went directly to Elsie Bellwood's room. His knock was answered by Elsie herself.

"May I come in?" asked Frank.

Then he entered the room, leaving the door standing wide open.

"Elsie," he said, "I have a surprise for you."

"Oh, what is it?" cried the girl, eagerly. "Is it something pleasant?"

"Perhaps so."

"Perhaps?"

"It was both pleasant and unpleasant for me."

The curiosity of the little ingenue was thoroughly aroused.

"Tell me, Frank!" she urged.

"There is someone in this town whom you know—someone who does not belong to our company."

Elsie's face brightened.

"Who? who?" she urged.

"Guess."

"I can't. Please tell me, Frank!"

"Well, it is Inza."

CHAPTER IX.

JEALOUSY.

In truth it was a surprise for Elsie Bellwood.

"Inza?" she fluttered—"Inza Burrage?"

"Yes," he nodded.

"Why—why, how can that be? Where is she?"

"At the Clarendon Hotel."

"Alone?"

"No."

"Who is with her?"

"Her father and—"

"Why do you hesitate, Frank?"

"Her father and—another."

"Who is the other?"

"A Harvard man, Creston Clayton by name."

"Good gracious! what are they doing here?"

"Ask me!"

"You don't know?"

"No."

"And you have seen them?"

"Just came from their rooms."

Elsie looked astounded.

"Did you talk with them?"

"Some."

"And you did not find out why they are here?"

"No."

Elsie looked at Frank with increasing astonishment. Then she came to him and took his hands.

"There is something strange about this," she slowly said, trying to read his face. Tell me all about it, Frank."

"There isn't much to tell," he said. "Sit down."

As they sat there facing each other, he told

her why he had gone to the room of Creston Clayton and how he had found Inza and her father there. He related faithfully all that had transpired, telling how he had been received and how Inza had spoken to him.

When he had finished there was a worried look on Elsie Bellwood's sweet face.

"Frank," she said, "there is something mysterious about this. I know Inza Burrage, and I know she respects and honors you. It is not like her to be unjust and cruel."

"She may have changed," said Frank, rather gloomily.

"No," declared Elsie, "she could not change in such a short time. You saw her while you were working on the railroad."

"Yes."

"You were poor then; you had lost your fortune. Did you see any change in Inza?"

"No. She was the same Inza as of old."

"And you may be sure her heart is the same now. I know it—I am certain of it. You have told me how she invited you to the house of her rich friend and introduced you to their set, even though you were nothing but an engineer on the railroad. Do you think she would have done that if she had changed in the least because you had become poor?"

"I suppose not."

"Suppose not! Frank, I am astonished at you! Of course she would not! You said she nursed you when you were ill. Did you see a change in her then?"

Frank confessed that he had not, but he did not tell Elsie how he had called her name in his delirium, but never once had spoken Inza's.

Never before had Elsie Bellwood seen Frank so dejected. At first she tried to cheer him, but, after a little, seeing how powerfully he had been affected, another sensation began to creek into her heart.

Frank had vowed over and over to her that

she was the one he loved more than all other girls in the world. He had sworn that he cared more for her than for Inza, and had convinced her that it would be a great mistake for him to mate with Inza when there was even a chance that, after marriage, he would have a loving thought of any other than his bride.

Elsie had been unable to meet and withstand Frank's subtle arguments, and, at last, she had been convinced. At last, she had felt in her heart of hearts that it was right that she and Frank should care for each other as they did.

But now what was this she saw in Frank's face and manner? Inza had given him the cold shoulder, and he was deeply dejected. Inza had seemed attentive to another, and he could not conceal the fact that it had sent a pang of jealousy through him.

That was what cut Elsie to the heart; that was what filled her with doubts and fears. She had come to believe it right that she and Frank should be all in all to each other, and now, when she saw that he was as jealous of Inza and had been hurt by Inza's manner, Elsie experienced a sensation that frightened her.

For the first time in her life Elsie Bellwood was jealous—thoroughly jealous. It was a terrible feeling, and it made her sick and faint.

"He still loves Inza!" was the cry that she smothered in her tortured heart.

Everything swam around her. She realized that she was toppling in her chair, and then she sat up straight and stiff, with a great effort.

"Elsie!" cried Frank, in alarm. "What is it? You are so white!"

"Nothing," she answered, bravely forcing a laugh. "It made me angry to—to think that—that Inza should care to treat—you—like—that."

She hesitated and stammered over it, but forced the words from her lips. Frightened at herself she began to feel that down in her wounded heart a deep hatred for Inza Burrage had sprung into life. She tried to fight against it, but it grew and it grew.

She had sacrificed herself in order not to come between Frank and Inza. She had felt that she had no right to separate them, and she had done everything in her power to unite them. No human being could realize how much she had suffered in trying to do what she believed her duty.

All her efforts had been wasted. Frank had followed her till he learned the truth. Fate had thrown them together, and he had told her how much he cared for her. She had been led to believe that they were destined for each other and nothing could separate them. During the time she had been on the road with Frank she had grown happier and happier, till it seemed that her cup was nearly full.

And now what right had Inza Burrage to appear and dash that cup from her lips? Had she not suffered enough for Inza? Must she go through it all again?

For a moment she was soothed by the thought that Inza was with another for whom she seemed to care, and she had treated Frank with cold scorn. Then she grew angry because Inza had done so.

"Oh, I shall hate her! I shall hate her!" was the secret cry of her heart.

She felt guilty and wretched, and still there was some satisfaction in thinking that she had a real cause to hate her former friend.

"What has she done for me?" Elsie asked herself. "I have done everything in my power for her."

Then she remembered how, even while she seemed the most heartless and fickle, Frank Merriwell had continued to care for her—

had seemed to care for her more than ever before.

Somewhere, sometime Elsie had read that it was natural for a man to care for that which seemed the least attainable. She was satisfied that Merry had been honest in his assertion that Elsie was the dearer to him; but now he had seen Inza with another, she had given him the cold shoulder, and it really seemed that by so doing she had redoubled his affection for her.

Elsie took her hat and coat from a hook on the wall.

"Where are you going?" asked Frank.

"To see Inza," she answered, decisively.

"I will escort you over to the hotel," he said, "and I hope your visit will be pleasanter than mine."

"You know Inza and I are the firmest friends."

"Perhaps you will find she has changed toward you."

"No. Remember we have sworn to remain firm friends, no matter what may happen."

"I know, but——"

"It strikes me that our friendship has been tested," said Elsie, adjusting her hat by aid of the little mirror on the wall. "I am ready. Come."

They left the room together.

CHAPTER X.

THE AWAKENING OF ELSIE.

Little did Frank Merriwell know of the three pairs of eyes peering out at him from a window of the Little Dandy saloon as he escorted Elsie Bellwood to the Clarendon Hotel.

One pair were black and snakish, one pair were red-glowing and unsteady, and one pair swollen and blackened.

"That's the girl!" exclaimed the owner of the snakish eyes. "She was in the chorus at Schnaider's in St. Louis. I found her there, and I was going to send her out on the road in this very play, 'John Smith.' Didn't know Merriwell and the girl were acquainted. He traced me, caught me, recovered his play, had me arrested. Now he is making a raft of money with the play and the girl."

"I believe he is in love with that girl," hissed the owner of the red-glowing eyes.

"Sure thing," nodded the first speaker. "There's no question about that."

"Wa-al, ef I kin see straight," growled the possessor of the bruised and blackened eyes, "that yar gal is a peach, an' I don't blame him none whatever for bein' stuck onto her."

"Curse him! curse her! curse them both!" raved the one with the reddish eyes. "I hate her because he cares for her!"

"Wa-al, you must have a bug in yer head. I ain't got no hardness ag'inst her, even ef he did knock me out in ther Clarendon."

"Now you must knock him out," said the owner of the snakish eyes. "It's fifty dollars in your pocket if you do it, you know."

Then the three gathered at one end of the bar to plot against Frank Merriwell.

Merry escorted Elsie to the hotel, and she went straight up to Inza's room.

A knock brought Inza to the door. The two girls stood face to face.

"Inza!"

Elsie started forward, her hands outstretched.

Inza drew back.

"Will you come in?" she said, coldly.

Elsie was in the room, and she was staring at Inza Burrage in the utmost amazement.

"Inza," she said, "Is this the way you meet me after—after we have been separated so long?"

"It has been some time since we met," said the dark-eyed girl, her voice calm and steady.

"I thought it possible we might never meet again."

"And—and you hoped it would—be so?" faltered Elsie, frozen by the reception given her by her old-time friend.

"No; I don't know that I cared," was Inza's cruel answer.

Elsie fell back, one hand going up to her throbbing heart. Her eyes grew wide and her face was drawn with pain.

"Inza!" she whispered, holding out one hand, while the other still remained pressed to her bosom—"Inza, is this you? Can it be? Inza, are you the friend I knew and loved?"

They were alone. Bernard Burrage was with Creston Clayton in the room of the latter.

The dark-eyed girl lifted her eyebrows.

"Now don't get sentimental, Miss Bellwood," she said, icily. "Do not attempt any of-your stage business with me. If I wish to see you act, I can pay the price and witness a regular performance."

Elsie's hands went up to her eyes, as if she would shut out the sight of that cold, haughty, handsome face.

"Oh, cruel! cruel! cruel!" she half-sobbed.

Then, of a sudden, she straightened up.

"Is that it?" she cried. "Is that why you meet me thus?"

"Is what?" was the placid question.

"Is it because I am an actress? Is it because, now that my father is dead, I was forced to do something to make a living? Have I lowered myself in your eyes by going on the stage? Ah! that is it! Heavens! I did not think it of you!"

Now there was accusation in Elsie's manner.

"You are mistaken," declared Inza; "that makes no difference with me."

"Then what is it? Tell me! Why did

you treat Frank in such a heartless manner? Why have you met me like this?"

"Must I account for my actions to you?" asked the dark-eyed girl with a toss of her head.

"No, Inza, but we were friends once. We said we would remain friends always, no matter what happened."

"Foolish girls will make many such pledges, but they seldom keep them."

"Then our friendship is at an end. Well, it's through no fault of mine. My conscience is clear. I did not wilfully come between you and Frank. It was fate. I tried my best to make him despise me, so that he would remain true to you."

"Ha! ha!" laughed Inza, again tossing her shapely head. "You tried your best—yes. Your best was poor enough. You didn't know how. Now, if I choose I could make him despise me. But what do I care whether he despises me or not! He is nothing to me!"

"Nothing?"

"Absolutely nothing. I am done with him—forever!"

There was something like exultation in Elsie's heart when she heard this. So Inza had withdrawn, and this was to be the end of the rivalry between them.

Then came a feeling of indignation.

"I presume," she said, "there is some very good reason for this?"

"Of course," was the cool answer. "You have won him; I'd be a fool to hang to him longer. You came between Frank Merriwell and me, and you have won. He is yours, and you are welcome to him. I am sure I do not want him. Once I thought him a hero, but something happened to-day that caused me to think that he has changed. He stood by and saw a ruffian beat Mr. Clayton insensible, and he did not even lift a hand to interfere. That was cowardice!"

Elsie stiffened as if receiving an electric shock. A sudden and remarkable change came over her.

"It was not cowardice!" she cried, clearly. "You know it was not! Mr. Clayton would not permit him to interfere! There is not a drop of cowardly blood in Frank Merriwell! You, Inza Burrage, who were saved from death in the jaws of a mad dog by Frank, who were rescued almost from beneath a railroad train by him, who were saved by him from being blown to atoms by a dynamite bomb, who owe your life to him—you should be the last to utter such words! Shame, Inza Burrage—shame on you! You are not the Inza I knew! You have changed—you have become ungrateful, unjust, cruel, heartless! Once I thought you more worthy of his love than I. Now I know better! You have turned from him because he is poor—because he is an actor! You have found another who is rich, and you no longer care for your poor friends! Bah! You are not worthy of Frank Merriwell's respect! Never again shall I regret that I came between you, for I know I am more worthy of him than you are!"

Was this Elsie—Elsie usually so gentle and shrinking? Now her eyes shone with a fine light, her pretty face was flushed, she was drawn to her full height, and she regarded the other girl with great scorn.

And Inza? Pale faced, astounded, bewildered, she shrank before the accusing eyes and words of her former friend. She had not dreamed it would come to this. She had not dreamed there could be such fire and spirit in Elsie.

Elsie's passion was at its height. Fairly trembling, she went on:

"You say you are done with Frank Merriwell! It is well for him that you are! Keep your word; let him alone. I have kept every

pledge to you, and you know it. Haven't I?"

Inza bowed. She could not speak then.

"You have renounced him!" panted Elsie. "You have cut yourself clear from us both. I am glad the time has come! I am glad to know you as you are! But I warn you to keep away from him now! He is everything to me, and, now that I believe you are not worthy of him, it will not be well for you to come between us."

Inza forced a laugh.

"You are quite an actress!" she sneered. "I wonder what you would do if I did come between you?"

Elsie was dumb for a moment. Then she advanced toward Inza, her hands clenched and held straight down at her side. Leaning forward, she looked straight into Inza's eyes and hissed:

"I would kill you!"

CHAPTER XI.

LAUGHTER AND TEARS.

Frank was amazed at the change in Elsie when she came down from Inza's room.

"What is it?" he quickly asked. "What has happened?"

"Don't ask me!" she said, hoarsely. "I can't talk about it now! I'm too mad!"

"Mad? You?"

"Yes! Come, quick! I must get back to my room!"

She hurried out of the hotel, accompanied by the wondering youth. She would not answer his questions, and she almost ran on her way back to the Magnificent Hotel.

In her room, Elsie tore off her hat and coat and flung them on the bed.

Frank's astonishment grew. Never before had he seen her like this. He gazed at her, and somehow she looked positively handsome.

"I can't!" she cried. "It makes me too

angry to think of it! Oh, I hate her—I hate her!"

"Inza—do you mean her?"

"Yes, I do! I'll never speak to her again—never, never, never!"

"Why, I thought you had pledged yourselves to be friends always, no matter what happened."

"We had, but she broke the pledge, and that releases me. I am glad! Now I can hate her!"

"Do you want to hate her?"

"Yes, yes, yes!"

She threw herself face downward on the bed, digging her fingers into the bed-clothes.

"Elsie, Elsie!" cried Frank, "I am sorry you went to see her! It has made you miserable."

"I am glad I went to see her!" she declared, sitting up and laughing wildly. "It has made me happy!"

Was this the same Elsie? He had not dreamed of such a side to her nature. Always he had thought of her as gentle and unresentful. Sometimes she had seemed almost spiritless. About her there had seemed something lacking; but now, all at once, he felt that the lacking element was there, and it made her more attractive than before. Not even Inza had ever showed finer spirit.

"What did she say to you, Elsie?"

"What didn't she say! She was insulting! Oh, Frank, I never dreamed Inza could be that way! Perhaps it is mean and selfish of me, but I am glad she is so."

"I don't think I understand you."

"Inza has shown her true nature. She doesn't care for you any more, Frank; she has found another. She even dared to sneer about you! Oh, that made me hate her! I wanted to strike her! Frank, I had hard work to keep from striking her!"

"You, Elsie?"

"Yes! Perhaps you are ashamed of me."

I can't help it if you are! Perhaps I should be ashamed of myself. I am not! I never knew what it was to hate anyone before, but now I feel a real joy in hating! It is a satisfaction—a pleasure!"

He stood there aghast. She saw it, and she laughed again. It was such a remarkable laugh, and it chilled him.

"Are you crazy, little girl?" he asked, anxiously.

"No. I made a fool of myself when I tried to convince you that I was fickle and false. I know it now. I thought Inza more worthy than I. She is not. I told her so—ha! ha! —I told her so! Oh, you may think me bold, but I can't help it!"

"It's wonderful!" muttered Frank, feeling strangely helpless. "I can't understand it."

Elsie looked at him, a wistful light coming into her eyes. Then, all at once, she cried:

"I want to be alone! Go, Frank—go! Leave me!"

"In a few moments, but you must tell me——"

"Go!" she cried, stamping her foot impatiently. "Go, I tell you! I wish to be alone!"

She pointed toward the open door like a tragedy queen.

"All right," said Merry. "Perhaps I had better talk with you some other time."

He went out, and she closed the door after him, quickly locking it. Then she flung herself on the bed once more, and laughed and cried hysterically. Her laughter was full of tears, and her tears were tears of joy.

CHAPTER XII.

THE MYSTERIOUS BOX.

Douglas Dunton told the truth when he said Frank had made himself famous in Blair by thrashing Pete McAllister. The story flew from lip to lip, and great was the amazement of the citizens of the place.

Big Pete had bullied everybody in the town since the day he had whipped five bad men in a square stand-up fight, and no one had ventured to say his soul was his own in the presence of the "chief," as McAllister called himself.

When night came almost every man in the town was thirsting to get a good square view of Merriwell. They turned out in a body to go to the "show," and those who were married took their wives along. Long before the hour for the doors to open a mob was besieging the box office for seats.

In high glee, Dunton came behind the scenes.

"I told you how it would be, Merriwell!" he cried. "The whole town has come out to see you, and there'll not be breathing room in the house to-night!"

"It seems so," admitted Frank, dejectedly.

"Hey! what's this?" cried Dunton. "Why, you act as if you felt sorry about it. What's the matter with you?"

"Nothing."

"I know better. You beat! I believe you are disgusted with yourself for whipping the the champion bully of this place. It was the greatest piece of advertising——"

"Is that all you think of? Anything for advertising! No matter if a man has to lower himself to fight a brute."

"You have done a great service for the town."

"How?"

"Why, this Big Pete was carrying things with a high hand. He was playing the bully and ruffian on all occasions, and the lives of peaceable, honest citizens were in peril. You have broken his reign of terror, and the town owes you a vote of thanks."

"The proper authorities should have looked out for McAllister."

"But the proper authorities did not look

out for McAllister. Besides that, you squared Clayton's account with him."

"Confound Clayton!"

Frank turned away, and Dunton whistled.

"Never knew him to be this way," said the actor. "He's not a bit like himself."

Others noticed the change in Frank.

Of course Frank had talked with Hodge about Inza, but he had said very little, and Bart had been puzzled by Merry's manner.

Hodge was not a person to ask many questions, but he decided to see Inza and find out what had happened.

When he called at the hotel, however, and sent up his card, Inza refused to see him.

This staggered Bert.

"The dickens is to pay!" decided Frank's friend.

It did not take him long to find out that Inza was very friendly with the young Harvard man who had come to Blair in company with her and her father.

Hodge also obtained the further information that Clayton was interested in the Jumbo mine, and that was why he had come to that wild and rough mining settlement.

The Jumbo was said to be one of the most valuable mines in the town.

But why were Bernard Burrage and his daughter there?

Hodge remembered that Inza's father had seemed determined to marry his daughter to a wealthy man, and it began to look to Bart as if arrangements had been made for the union of Inza and Clayton.

"Well," said Hodge, "I hope something of the kind will happen, for Merriwell has been balancing between Inza and Elsie long enough. He is not situated to marry either of them for a long time to come, and I believe Elsie will make the best wife when the time comes for him to hitch up. If Inza is out of the way, he won't bother about her any more. If there is any way I can get her mar-

ried off to Clayton or anybody else except Frank Merriwell, I won't do a thing but help things along."

Elsie Bellwood came to the theatre early that night. She entered bearing a small package under her arm.

Frank was the first to meet her.

"Oh, see!" she exclaimed. "I have a present."

She held up the package.

"A present?" said Merry. "Who from?"

"I don't know. A boy gave it to me. Said it was from a person who admired me very much."

"It strikes me you have a mash," laughed Frank. "Perhaps it is a diamond necklace, or something of the sort."

"Well, I think I'll find out what it is."

Elsie skipped away to her dressing-room, where she prepared to open the package.

She untied the string and took off the outside wrapper. A small, square box was revealed. The lid of the box was secured by a lock, and the key to the lock was inside the paper that had inclosed the box.

"Well," said Elsie, sitting down by a little table, on which she placed the box, "there seems to be something mysterious about this business. There is no name on the box, so I do not know who sent me this. Perhaps the name will be inside."

She took the tiny key and inserted it in the lock. Something caused her to hesitate about unlocking it. A strange sensation of danger crept over her.

"I am foolish!" she exclaimed, and once more she moved to open the box.

Just then the door of the room flew open with a bang, and Frank Merriwell burst in, shouting:

"Stop, Elsie! Don't open that box! It is an infernal machine, and will blow you up!"

CHAPTER XIII.

A MYSTERY TO SOLVE.

Elsie dropped the key and started backward.

"Frank," she exclaimed, "is this a joke?"

"Not much!" declared Merry, as he quickly caught up the box. "If I am not mistaken, you have been within a hair's breadth of death."

"But, tell me, how do you know this?" panted Elsie, trembling with the shock.

"Can't explain now. I'm going to take this thing out and see if it is right."

"Don't open it, Frank—please don't! You will be killed!"

"I won't open it. I'll turn it over to the authorities."

Frank hurried away with the box.

Pete McAllister was the man who had brought word to the theatre that the box was dangerous. He had applied for admission at the stage door immediately after Elsie's entrance. When he was refused, he declared that it was a matter of life or death, and seemed so earnest in his desire to see Frank that Merry was called.

"Look hyar," said Big Pete, "I didn't come hyar ter fight. I've got enough of fightin' with you. But I do want ter tell yer not ter let thet gal open that thar box what was give her."

"Why not?" asked Frank.

"Because it'll blow her ter Kingdom Come ther instant she lifts ther lid," declared the big fellow. "I may be pritty bad, but I don't stand fer no murderin' of gals—specially purty gals like her."

"What are you giving me?" cried Frank. "Who would wish to injure Elsie?"

"Somebody what knows you're stuck onto her an' thinks they can hurt you by hurtin' her. I'm not givin' yer a steer, pard. Ef you want ter save ther gal, git that yar box

away from her in a hurry. You hear me shout?"

Frank was impressed by the giant's words and manner, and he made a rush for Elsie's dressing-room, where he arrived just in time to prevent her from opening the box.

Even after getting the box, Frank could not believe anybody would be fiendish enough to try to hurt Elsie in such a manner.

He took the box out of the theatre without delay, carrying it straight to Bill Bronson, the sheriff, into whose hands he delivered it, telling him all about it.

"I'll take charge of ther thing," said Bronson. "An' I reckon I'll find a way ter open it without explodin' ther pesky thing, in case she is built ter explode."

Frank returned to the theatre, where he found Elsie in a state of great agitation and excitement. McAllister had disappeared.

Believing it necessary to calm Elsie, Merry explained everything to her, ending by telling her that it was more than probable that McAllister had lied.

"But I believed it best to make sure," he said. "I think it will turn to be some kind of a joke."

As had been anticipated, the house was packed long before time for the curtain to go up. In the fourth row from the stage sat Inza Burrage, between her father and Creston Clayton, who had been patched up enough to come out.

Inza applauded when Ephraim Gallup appeared and sang his song, but she did not make a move when Elsie came on.

The audience seemed waiting for something. What they were waiting for became apparent when Frank Merriwell entered.

Never had the young actor received a heartier reception. Never had he been more boisterously applauded. For five minutes there were thunders that kept Frank bowing and smiling.

When comparative quiet was restored, a man in the centre of the house stood up on his seat, attracting the attention of everybody.

It was Pete McAllister, with two black eyes, and looking sadly battered.

"Look out! he's goin' to shoot!" cried somebody.

"Not on yer life!" said the giant. "I didn't git up hyar to raise no row nor to make no disturbance, but I want ter say that this yar tenderfoot show gent, Mr. Frank Merriwell, kin lick Jim Corbett an' John L. Sullivan rolled inter one. He done me up in short order this yar day, an' while he stays in Blair I resigns ter him ther title of mighty chief an' you can bet yer boots I'll lay mighty low an' chirp soft. That's all!"

Then there was another tumult of applause, and it was some time before the actors could go on with the play.

* * * * *

When the play was over that night the news was brought that Bill Bronson, the sheriff, had been badly burned about the face and hands while trying to open the box Frank had placed in his care. The man had not

been killed, but he was disfigured for life by the burns.

"And that fate was meant for Elsie!" cried Frank. "A wretch in human guise intended to disfigure her! I'll find out who it was, and he shall suffer!"

"Perhaps it was not a he," insinuated Hodge.

"What do you mean?" asked Frank.

"Oh, I don't like to say," came evasively from Bart's lips. "But you know there is a person who might hate Elsie for certain reasons, and she might wish to disfigure her."

"You don't mean——"

Frank stopped aghast, appalled.

"No!" he cried; "by heaven, no! I know whom you mean, but you cannot make me believe her such a fiend! It was someone else, and I'll find out the truth without delay! I swear it!"

(The End.)

The next number (143) of the Tip Top Weekly will contain "Frank Merriwell's Problem; or, The Vanishing of Elsie," by the author of "Frank Merriwell."



TIP TOP WEEKLY.

"AN IDEAL PUBLICATION FOR THE AMERICAN YOUTH"

NEW YORK, DECEMBER 31, 1898.

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APPLAUSE.

I have for some time wished to drop you a few lines, expressive of my regard for your publication, the "Tip Top Weekly."

Upon perceiving one of my school friends reading a copy of the "Tip Top," I was exceedingly surprised, for I supposed it to be one of the sensational, blood-curdling, absurd, unreal and trashy.

Well, my friend lent me a few copies; and with the first number that I read, my opinion—if that copy was a fair sample of them as a whole—underwent a swift change.

Imagine my surprise, when, instead of finding a story of the class I previously mentioned, I soon was deeply engrossed in a clean, healthy, moral, useful tale, of a true American—evidently the product of no "penny-a-liner," but a well educated, moral man, whose writing bore that unmistakable polish of refinement so visibly lacking in many "stories for boys," and whose aim obviously was to place before the American youth a noble example and whose stories no parent could reasonably object to, upon any grounds whatsoever.

Indeed, it is but lately that the fact is beginning to be recognized, that boys, as well as elders, must have good, healthy literature—that one cannot as a boy read trashy stuff and when twenty-one suddenly change off to the higher works, and leave the others as hut memories of one's boyhood days, when anything would suffice. The reading of bad or poor literature is a habit which, when once acquired, requires great exertion to master.

Later, I found that I was correct in my estimation of the "Tip Top," and shall in a few weeks become a subscriber.

I have also asked my book dealer to obtain for me, if possible, all "Tip Tops," from No. 1 to date.

If other boys have been benefited by Frank Merriwell's worthy example as I have—and I hope they have—then the "Tip Top" has succeeded in its mission, and is a peer among its fellows.

Wishing your publication every success, and earnestly thanking Mr. Standish for his praiseworthy work.

Belmont, Cal.

Your letter is appreciative and points all well made. That the Tip Top is so valuable to its readers is a source of great satisfaction to both author and publishers. We thank you for your good wishes.

H. R. DENTON.

Gentlemen, I have been reading your Tip Top weekly, No. 1 to the present number, and think it is the best paper I ever read. I hope Frank will return to Yale, as I am a great lover of sport. We have had an athletic club here for almost four years and get all kinds of reading. The Tip Top is the favorite; all the boys get one, and don't like to wait so long for it. We wish to state that we think Mr. Hartley's plan a good one, and as to the badges, you should fit it so that every reader getting a badge should belong to a club called the Tip Top Young Men's Association, or something like that, and have a branch in every city, so that one member could write to the other, but have it fixed so that you would have to give the password in the letters. I hope all your books will be as good as in the past. Hoping to hear from Frank's college queen, Winnie Lee and the rest of his Yale friends, also wishing your Tip Top the best of success.

Brownie A Club—Martin Davern, president; Thos. Moore, vice-president; Chas. Hassart, secretary; Alex. Devitt, treasurer; W. J. Davern, manager. Some members—Mike Davern, James Wilson, Tom Summers, John Moore, Albert McCreary, Edward Clair, Chas. Crummer, Robt. Gibson, Jos. Donovan, Jas. Kimmons, Albert Logan, Jos. Davern, and 12 more members.

All suggestions are welcome, though many are not entirely practicable. Those of our readers who are interested in the idea of this correspondent should write the Brownie Club's president for further particulars.

I read in Tip Top weekly No. one hundred and thirty-two, that you wished to know how the boys take to the idea of a badge. I have asked the boys of my school, and I find that eight out of ten like the proposition and are willing to get a badge. I have asked about forty boys. I have read the Tip Top weekly since No. One, and I think it is the best weekly published.

HAROLD HARBISON.

Chicago, Ill.

We are pleased to find that the idea of having a badge is so popular with our readers. There has been some delay in getting proper designs made for the badge, but they will soon be ready and we shall probably tell you more about it in next issue.

Although well aware of the fact that your time must be fully occupied with your important work, I cannot refrain from writing and complimenting you upon that most interesting of all periodicals, the Tip Top weekly.

It was only recently that one fell into my hands, and it so interested me that I have been purchasing them regularly ever since, and find in them matter of absorbing interest and amusement.

From the many references made in the stories and correspondence to Frank's past life and adventures, I am very desirous of following his career from the start, and would like to ask if you think there is any possibility of my obtaining quarterlies Nos. 1 and 2, and as I propose sending for 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 at once, I would then have the library complete.

Wishing you success in all your publications, and long life to that one dealing with the life, adventures and ultimate good that must result from such a character as Frank Merriwell's.

F. LORNE ROE.

New Westminster, B. C.

Our time is never so fully occupied that we cannot give attention to our correspondents, even though there may sometimes be delays. All back numbers and all quarterlies can now be supplied. We thank you for your good wishes.

I am more than pleased with the Tip Top weekly and have read nearly all of them. Those I haven't read I expect to get at some future time. I want Frank to marry Inza when it comes time to marry, and am glad to see he is going back to Yale after his theatrical career, as I think they need him this year, if ever before, as you know the football team is no good, and I think if Frank enters Yale again he will make things hum at "old Eli." Hoping for you the success the Tip Top deserves F. L. ESTES.

Osceola, Ia.

We are glad to see you place such confidence in Frank's Ability as a football player. Whether or not they win with the pigskin when he returns to Yale you may depend upon it that Frank will be willing to do more than his share toward the success of the game.

I write to express my thanks for the pleasant moments afforded me while reading your Tip Top weeklies. I think they are instructive as well as interesting, and think that Frank Merriwell is a good example of the American youth.

Mt. Alry.

ROBERT, S. BARNES

We thank you for this expression of your opinion, in which, as appears elsewhere many times in these columns, so many readers join you. This is what we like to be told.

I have been a constant reader of the Tip Top Weekly, and think it is fine. It has been stated that Frank is to return to Yale. I would like to know if he is going on a visit or to finish his course there. I remember when his misfortune befel him that he was to leave Yale, perhaps forever. In the applause column I have read several articles where it was stated that Frank will return to college, and I would like to know how, as visitor or student. Hoping it is the latter, and wishing long life to our noble hero, and I remain a constant reader of the best boys' paper published.

A. E. L.

Johnston, R. I.

Your wish will be satisfied, for Frank will return to Yale as a student, and have many another lively experience with his old chums.

I have read every Tip Top from the first to the last, and like them just as well as ever. I would like to see Frank back at Yale with all his old friends again. Hoping that the Tip Top will live forever.

BILLY SWEENE.

Phoenix, Ariz.

Your letter is both "short and sweet," and your generous wish we will do our best to have fulfilled. Frank will soon return to Yale and meet his old friends there.

We have read a number of weeklies, but I think the Tip Top excels them all for good reading and exciting adventures. Hope it will continue as exciting as ever.

ROSCOE GUIN,

JIM WOODS,

HENRY MILLER.

Pittsburg, Pa.

Good reading is a very broad term, and yet we think you have very properly applied it to the Tip Top, which stands for all that is good for its readers. We thank you for your opinion.

In reading Tip Top Number 132 I ran across that proposition of Mr. Hartley, and as I have read all of your publications I thought that I would take the liberty of stating my view of his proposition. I think, as he does, that it would more than please the readers of Tip Top Weekly to have a badge and pass-

word, and also to help one another in the time of need, and I for one would be glad to buy a badge and to have the password, as it would seem like meeting a friend when we met a wearer of one of the badges with the password. I also think that if the young men of to-day would pattern after Frank Merriwell that the world would be better off for so doing. I am a Northern boy who has enlisted in the army of Uncle Sam, and at the present time we are camped at Camp Hamilton, just outside of the city of Lexington, Ky. My birthplace is in Gloucester, Mass., on old Cape Ann. We are almost ready to move further South. Hoping that these few lines will help Mr. Hartley's proposition along. Please give my respects to Mr. Standish, as I have read a great many of his stories, and I have improved myself by reading them.

GEO. A. WILKINS,

Co. G, Elghth Mass. Inf., U. S. V.

This is an interesting letter from one of Uncle Sam's boys, who is in a position to profit by the example of Frank Merriwell, the hero of the Tip Top, of whom he has such a deservedly good opinion. We shall certainly convey your friendly greeting to Mr. Standish, who likes to be thus remembered.

I have read your Tip Top Weekly for some time, and I can truthfully say that it is the best publication that I have ever read. I also agree with Lynn Hartley as to having a Tip Top badge. Long live the hero of Tip Top.

W. B. ROSELLE.

Dallas, Tex.

You will soon hear all about the badge which so many readers have expressed a wish to secure. We thank you for your good opinion and good wishes.

We have been reading the Tip Top Weekly from Number 1 up to the present number, and think the Frank Merriwell stories the best we have ever read. Will Frank meet Browning, Hodge, Diamond and Rattleton in the near future? Hoping that Frank will soon return to Yale. Signed—J. J. Y., J. W. S., F. M. P., R. S. F., O. A. K., C. A., C. J. R., A. G. P., N. A. P., A. R., and others.

Starke, Fla.

Your letter was answered by the incident contained in the last issue of this weekly in which Frank met his old friends. Our readers should remember that at least a month must elapse before an answer to their letters can be given, as the Tip Top requires this amount of time for manufacturing and distribution.

I have been reading Tip Top Weekly from Number 68, and will continue always. I find it contains the best stories ever published. I also read Diamond Dick, Jr., and Nick Carter. I wish Frank good luck and also Mr. Standish. Does Frank return to Yale? Does Diamond, Jr., live?

HARRY RUSSIN.

Saxonville, Mass.

Your opinion of the Tip Top stories coincides with that of many readers, and we are glad to enroll your name among those of the long list of Frank's admirers. Frank will soon return to Yale. The character of Diamond Dick, Jr., is drawn from life.

We have read nearly every one of the Tip Tops, and we think that they are better than any other stories. I see in Tip Top Number 132 a proposition made by Lynn Hartley to the effect that you have made a badge for the Tip Top readers, and also a password. I am in favor of the proposition.

CHAS. WIEMANN,
FRED CHURCH.

Milwaukee, Wis.

We are pleased to note that you and so many Tip Top readers are interested in the badge. It will soon be ready, and will be made so attractive that every reader will desire to have one. Look for an announcement regarding it in next issue. We would advise all our correspondents to write their letters in ink. Yours was in pencil, and some of it nearly obliterated.

I have read all the stories written by Mr. Standish and published by you in your greatest of all weeklies—the Tip Top—and I think very much of them. Your weekly is indeed "an ideal publication for the American youth," and one that every American boy and girl should read. It is both interesting and instructive, and I have profited very much from the lessons I have found in them. I would greatly like to see Frank regain his fortune and return to Yale, there to again become the king of fun and sport, or to go again on travels in foreign lands and before long to marry Inza, who is my great girl favorite. She is a true model of the American girl, and she is a great favorite among the other boys in the navy who read your publication, and who, by the way, are a great many, even the old tars who have spent a life time in the navy, love to read your great weekly, and think Inza the true girl for Frank. In one of your last issues I noticed in your correspondence columns where you advised a reader as to the salary of a naval apprentice, which you referred to as being \$9, \$10, \$12, \$15 and \$24 per month. If I am not mistaken that has been changed recently. A third class apprentice gets \$9 per month, a second class apprentice \$15, and a first class apprentice \$24 per month. I am at present suffering from a fever contracted aboard the ship Texan while in Cuban waters in our late war. I am improving very rapidly, and will soon leave the service in order to return to college and finish my education and prepare myself to start as a partner in my father's cotton establishment in New Orleans. I would like very much to hear from any and all Tip Top readers who wish to enlist or know anything about our navy. A. F. M'HARDY.
U. S. Naval Hospital, Brooklyn, N. Y.

Your letter is an interesting one and will, we feel sure, be read with much pleasure by our readers, some of whom may wish to write you on the subject, upon which you are doubtless well informed. You are correct as to the salary of a naval apprentice. We are pleased to know that you have profited by reading the Tip Top Weekly, and if you have carefully read the Applause Column you have noticed replies to several of the points covered in your letter.

I have written to you once, and I thought I would write again in praise of the Tip Top Weekly. It is truly an ideal publication for the American youth. It couldn't have a finer name, for it gives a young man a big ideal, and teaches that might is not always right. It also shows that a man can be a hero one to me, that of a practical Christian. I think it was a fine one, and it made me try to be more of a practical Christian. I think the weeklies 100 per cent. better than any other, and that the college and railroad series are the best. I will be glad when Frank goes back to Yale, as she needs him on her football eleven, especially as this season shows. I'd like to say a word to those impatient people who are trying to make Mr. Standish's stories for him. Don't bother him with such silly ideas of having Frank meet Diamond Dick, Jr., or who he shall marry. Let him pursue the same course he has been going, as I'm sure the stories couldn't be better.

Springfield, Mass.

H. JOHNSON.

This correspondent writes a good letter, and it will be seen that he criticizes those who have made various suggestions or comments regarding the future plans of the noted author of this series. Now, while many of these suggestions are not appropriate the majority of them are the natural outcome of the thoughts which follow the reading of these fascinating stories. Of course, Mr. Standish is the best judge as to what the future stories of the Tip Top are to be, but he welcomes all letters from our readers, whose interests he has got at heart, and when suggestions are made it is an evidence of how great an interest in these stories is taken by the correspondent. Your good opinion of the Tip Top is most welcome.

I have read your weekly from Number 5 to present issue, and think it is the best paper published. I also like Klondike Kit and Diamond Dick, Jr. I wish that Klondike Kit was weekly instead of monthly. Is Frank to meet all his chums soon? I would also like to have Frank's picture published. Long live Tip Top.
San Antonio, Tex. L. W.

You are evidently an enthusiastic reader of several of our publications, and your wish that Klondike Kit be published weekly may soon be realized, as these stories have attracted the warm support of many who recognize how true to life are the scenes depicted therein. You will soon see in these columns something that will interest you about Frank's picture.

Correspondence.

G. T., Meadville, Pa.—You cannot drill a square hole. You must punch it.

W. E. H., Trinidad, Col.—There is no premium on the half-cent piece of 1809.

M. C., Peoria, Ill.—Roosevelt's plurality in the gubernatorial contest was over 16,000.

R. B., Boston, Mass.—We can find no record of a Harvard football player of that name.

J. H. P., Pawtucket, R. I.—No, we do not intend to publish a paper of the type you mention.

G. G. R., Milwaukee, Wis.—The training ships differ but little. One is quite as good as another.

C. O. and Others, St. Thomas, Ont.—Why not call your club "The Tip Top" or "The Merry Club?"

Hans, Pretty Marsh, Me.—Write for a catalogue, which will tell you just what you want to know. Give your real name.

J. M. C., Shickshinny, Pa.—To enter Annapolis as a cadet a boy must be from fifteen to twenty years and in perfect physical condition.

C. A. R., Springfield, Mo.—You are above the average for a boy of your age, but you seem to be well proportioned. There is no occasion for worry.

W. A. W., Reading, Mass.—The Harvard Law School, at Cambridge, is one of the best in the country. There is also a law school attached to the Boston University.

Yale, New York City.—We know of no preparation that will enable you to handle with impunity red-hot iron or molten lead. We would advise you not to try it. It is a dangerous proceeding, to say the least.

H. J., Springfield, Mass.—If you write to Yale University, New Haven, you will receive a catalogue giving you full particulars as to expenses. You can obtain from Street & Smith all back numbers of the Tip Top.

Luke McGlue, New York City.—All back numbers of the Tip Top are now in print. Clif Faraday is the hero of the "True Blue," published weekly. Dewey destroyed the Spanish fleet May 1. Santiago surrendered July 14. Frank will return to Yale very soon.

L. M. C., Malden, Mass.—You could not be in a better place to study electrical engineering than where you are, within a few miles of Boston. The Institute of Technology is capital, and there are splendid chances for studying electricity at Tufts College, close to your town.

R. H. T., Toledo, Ohio.—The only real cure is a strong effort of will. By all means try the remedy you speak of; it could do no harm and might have some effect; but everything really depends upon yourself; be careful and determined in trying to check yourself of the habit, and you will succeed in time.

W. H. C., Atlantic City, N. J.—There are a large number of recipes for making "blue paper" used in photography and also by architects. The following is the simplest: First part—Dissolve 8 grains citrate iron of ammonia in 1 dram of water. Second part—Dissolve 6 grains red prussiate potash in 1 dram of water. Then mix the first and second parts together and apply with a sponge. There is a prepared paper manufactured called saxe, which you can buy at an artist supply store.

J. K. D., Exeter, N. H.—Forty-one persons signed the constitution of government on board the Mayflower, and are known in history as the "Pilgrim Fathers." They were: John Carver, William Bradford, Edward Winslow, William Brewster, Isaac Allerton, Miles Standish, John Alden, Samuel Fuller, Christopher Martin, William Mullins, William White, Richard Warren, John Howland, Stephen Hopkins, Edward Tilley, John Tilley, Francis Cook, Thomas Rogers, Thomas Tinker, John Ridgedale, Edward Fuller, John Turner, Francis Eaton, James Chilton, John Crockston, John Billington, Moses Fletcher, John Goodman, Degory Priest, Thomas Williams, Gilbert Winslow, Edward Margeson, Peter Brown, Richard Britteridge, George Soule, Richard Clarke, Richard Gardiner, John Allerton, Thomas English, Edward Doty and Edward Lister. John Alden was the youngest of these, being only 21 years of age.

The Tip Top League Member's Badge

HALF PRICE TO OUR READERS ONLY.

In response to the urgent request of a host of Tip Top readers, the publishers have carefully considered a number of designs as badges of membership in the TIP TOP LEAGUE, finally adopting one which is an artistic gem of excellence. This organization is composed exclusively of and open only to Tip Top readers as members. The picture which will appear in next week's issue shows the design chosen, but it does not give you an adequate idea of the exquisite beauty of this elegant ornament. Solidly and substantially made, finished in gilt and beautifully embossed. Such a badge in lots of 1,000 or less would cost at least \$1.00 each. The widespread desire for this badge gives us so much faith in the enterprise that we have ordered 50,000, to secure the lowest possible rate, and are therefore enabled to offer it to our readers at a very low figure, viz.: Twenty Cents (TEN CENTS in cash or stamps and Ten Cents in Coupons). This barely covers the cost to us.

CONDITIONS

Each coupon is worth five cents when accompanied by five cents in stamps or coin. TWO COUPONS AND TEN CENTS SECURES YOU THE BADGE. You can get as many badges as you desire at the same rate by use of the extra coupons. Badges without coupons will cost fifty cents each. The coupons are free to Tip Top readers, and we adopt this method to prevent others from getting the badge at the special rate given to our patrons. IF YOU ARE A READER OF THE TIP TOP YOU ARE A MEMBER OF THE LEAGUE, AND ENTITLED TO WEAR THE EMBLEM OF THE ORDER—and our word for it, you will be more than pleased when you receive it.

TIP TOP LEAGUE

MEMBER'S COUPON

This Coupon and FIVE CENTS will be accepted for ten cents towards the purchase of the League Badge.

STREET & SMITH.

AN EXACT PICTURE

OF THE

LEAGUE ***
*** BADGE

Will appear in this
space next week...



DESCRIPTION.

The badge consists of a circular disc, overlaid on a Greek Cross, and pendant from a bar bearing the legend "Tip Top League." The circle bears the password of the League, "True as Steel," and a raised medallion head of Frank Merriwell.



A JEWEL THAT ANYONE MIGHT
WELL BE PROUD TO WEAR.

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STREET & SMITH.

To secure the promptest attention, address all letters on this subject to

.... THE TIP TOP LEAGUE

(Care STREET & SMITH)

81 Fulton Street, New York.

The offer formerly occupying this page (College Badges) is omitted for lack of space, but one of the above League coupons will be accepted in connection with the offer as formerly published.